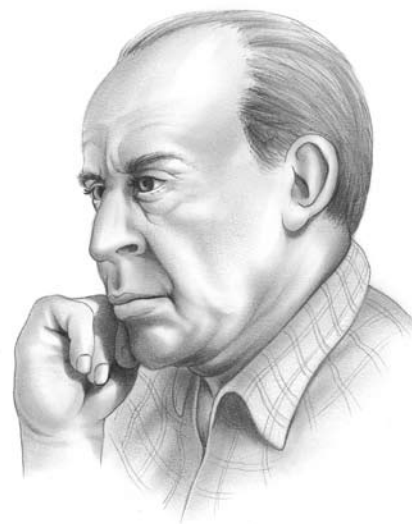




What Is Caregiver Burnout?

Your emotional and psychological health can affect your physical health. Many caregivers don't take time to care for themselves and begin to show signs of caregiver "burnout."

Your healthy body, mind and spirit benefit your loved one just as they benefit you. Learn the signs of caregiver burnout and seek help if you are experiencing them.



Signs of Caregiver Burnout

As a caregiver, you're under a lot of stress. It's common to go into a "caregiving frenzy" and let your own health suffer. Watch out for:

- Excessive use of alcohol, medications or sleeping pills
- Appetite changes — either eating too much or too little
- Depression, hopelessness, feelings of alienation, lack of energy to do new things
- Thoughts of death
- Losing control physically or emotionally
- Neglect or rough treatment of the person for whom you are caring
- Trouble falling or staying asleep
- Difficulty concentrating, missing appointments
- Marked loss of interest or pleasure
- Feeling worthless or guilty
- Change in appetite or weight
- Loss of energy
- Fearfulness of activity
- Sleeping too much or too little
- Lack of interest in personal hygiene
- Lack of interest in sex
- Anxiety
- Tearfulness
- Easily distracted
- Agitation or restlessness
- Inability to concentrate, make decisions, remember or comprehend instructions
- Thoughts of death or suicide
- Failure to return to work

Check for signs of depression also. Consult a doctor if you have experienced four or more of these for at least two weeks:

- Depressed mood (despondent, pessimistic about the future, hopelessness, withdrawn)

How can I avoid burnout?

It takes a combination of things to avoid burnout. Taking care of your physical health is a good way to stay emotionally healthy. Good nutrition and physical activity both help fight depression. And a good night's sleep can work wonders.

Call 1-800-AHA-USA1 (1-800-242-8721) or visit americanheart.org to learn more about heart health and get tips on eating right and getting enough physical activity in your daily life.

What do I do about depression?

Clinical depression is a serious illness and can keep you from being a good caregiver for your loved one. Depression is also common among survivors of heart and stroke events.

Stroke patients who may be disabled are especially at risk for depression.

For information on stroke, call 1-888-4-STROKE (1-888-478-7653) or visit StrokeAssociation.org.

What are the warning signs of heart attack and stroke?

Warning Signs of Heart Attack

Some heart attacks are sudden and intense, but most of them start slowly with mild pain or discomfort with one or more of these symptoms:

- Chest discomfort
- Discomfort in other areas of the upper body
- Shortness of breath with or without chest discomfort
- Other signs including breaking out in a cold sweat, nausea or lightheadedness

Warning Signs of Stroke

- Sudden weakness or numbness of the face, arm or leg, especially on one side of the body
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination
- Sudden, severe headache with no known cause

Learn to recognize a stroke. Time lost is brain lost.

Call 9-1-1 ... Get to a hospital immediately if you experience signs of a heart attack or stroke!

Do you have questions or comments for your doctor?

Take a few minutes to write your own questions for the next time you see your healthcare provider. For example:

I have many signs of depression.
Is there a treatment that
will help me feel better and provide
better care for my loved one?

